

APPROACH

to Mission

for the Congregation

Region

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City

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Division of Parish Development

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American Baptist Home Mission Societies

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Approach —————

APPROACH to Mission. . .has been prepared to help a congregation, or other expression of the church responsible for program development, to study its life in light of its

avowed understanding of Mission

its programmatic implementation of Mission

its resources, and

the needs of those whom it should serve.

The approach will be most effective if guided by one who stands outside the institutional life of the group, and who can, therefore, fill the role of enabler without being defensive about the program under study. His emotional investment should be in Mission, not in any specific institutional program.

Within the American Baptist fellowship persons most likely to be equipped by virtue of their training, and in a position to use APPROACH by virtue of their job responsibilities are

Area Ministers of administrative Regions

Resource Ministers of Regions/States/Cities

National staff persons in the area of Parish Development.

Hopefully, skilled pastors and other professional leaders of the congregation, and possibly laymen whose training and skills are in the enabling field, will be able to use it to help groups

to become more effective instruments of the Mission

to which God has called them.

For additional assistance write:

Division of Parish Development
The American Baptist Home Mission Societies
Valley Forge, Pennsylvania 19481

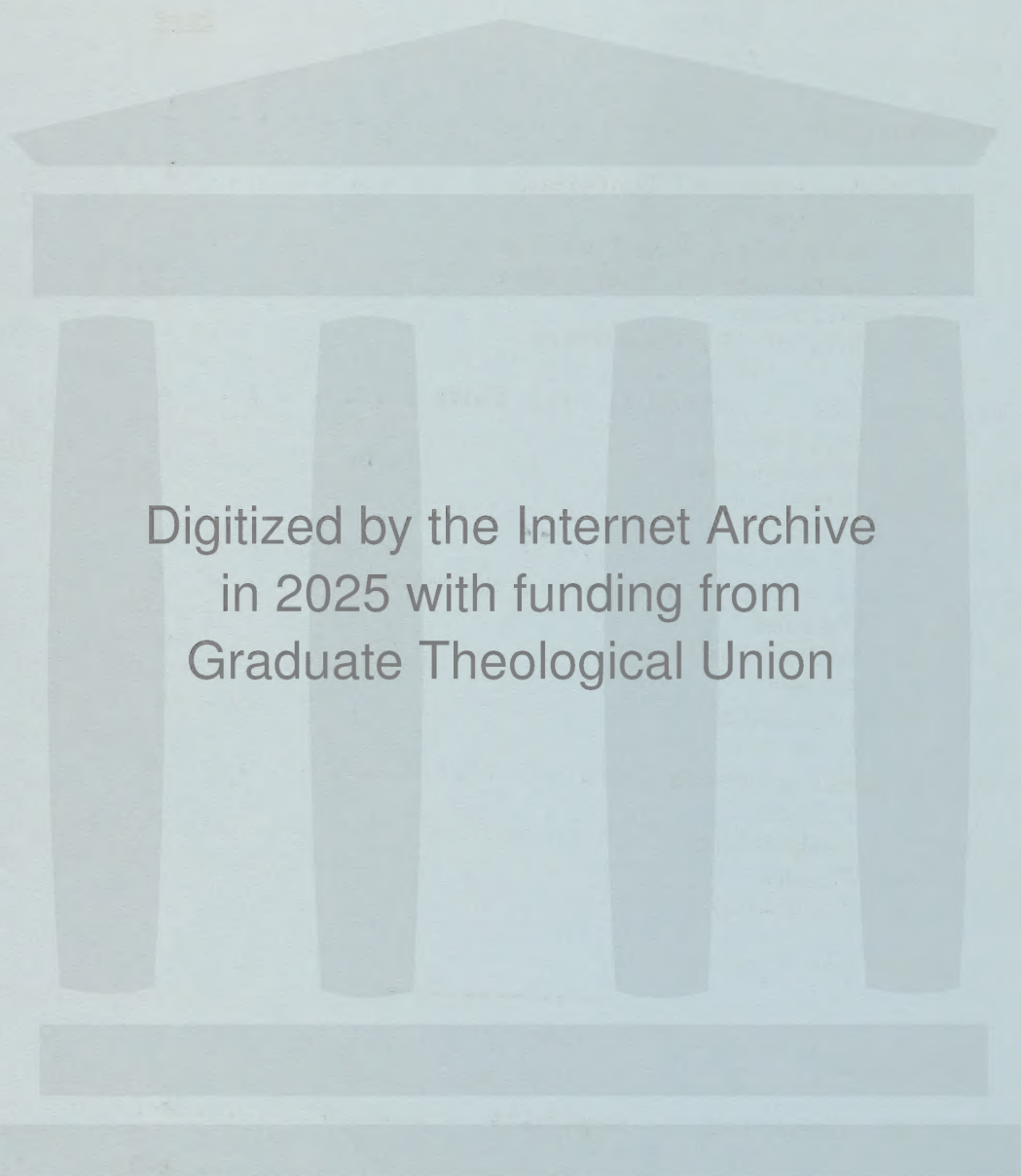
APPROACH to Mission

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APPROACH to Mission. . .

INTRODUCTION

The following guide has been prepared with the assumption that it will be used where a process of renewal has already begun, or where there is a genuine desire to embark on such a process. The conferences referred to are not expected to stand in isolation, but should be seen as part of a longer process which will utilize other resources, guidance, and nurturing opportunities. The value of the conference will be measured not in immediate terms of satisfaction, but in whether it contributes to the renewal process, which is an activity descriptive of a life style rather than of a goal achieved.

APPROACH will be best used if the group has taken the initiative in inviting the enabler to assist it in exploration of mission. Used as a promotional tool it undoubtedly will result in failure. Many of the elements found in the methodology are not new. They grow out of good group work processes, and have been tested in a number of situations by members of the staff of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies. Persons lacking skill and experience in such methods would do well to seek the aid of one so skilled in order to be of maximum effectiveness.

While a guiding principle should be to start with the group "where it is" in its understanding of mission, the need to engage in serious biblical study with a view to expanding that understanding might well emerge as a priority.

I. A Weekend Renewal Conference--General Approach to Renewal

Ideally the conference should begin Friday afternoon or evening and continue through Sunday afternoon or evening. Often Friday afternoon can be used as a time to get acquainted with the church building, the community, and the general program as it has existed in the past. If this time is spent with the staff, the evening can be used to begin conferences with small groups. A "windshield" survey of the community will be helpful.

A. Purpose: To discover where the congregation is in its understanding of its task, to help it to develop a growing understanding, and to develop program instruments for accomplishing mission.

B. Methodology and Time Use:

1. Friday: Two hours spent with the minister or ministerial staff, and begin group meetings if possible.
2. Saturday: Two hours spent with each board or major commission or committee, such as the Boards of Education, Deacons or Diaconate, Missions, Trustees, and Stewardship, and with leaders of major groups such as American Baptist Women, Men, and The Youth Fellowship. In some instances it will be possible to combine some of these groups. If the total number is less than six, some means of combination could be worked out. For example, if the church has a number of small groups in its program, leaders of these would fit under Christian Education or possibly along with Men's and Women's work as the small group work of the church. In determining the groups to be met do not neglect the youth. The size of each group should not exceed twelve. Eight is an optimum number.

3. Sunday morning: Preach or observe the preaching of the pastor. Either approach is good. Often the congregation itself considers that the input of the consultant through a sermon is a valuable thing, and hopefully, it is. It makes the entire congregation aware that a process of evaluation is going on and it gives opportunity for some input to the entire congregation. On the other hand, observation of the minister leading worship and preaching is valuable, since it gives many clues as to the tone of congregational life. If the Sunday morning program allows, plan for a "talk back" session between adults, youth, and the person preaching.
4. Sunday afternoon: A total of about three hours, with all the leadership of the church.

C. Questions for Discussion

It will be helpful to use the same questions with each group, though discussion format may vary.

1. Theory: What is the understanding of mission shared by the group?

Be careful with language. Some groups might not be familiar with the use of the word "mission" to describe its task. It might be better to ask people to respond to one or more of the following questions: "What words or phrases do you use to describe the task of the congregation?" "What do you think the congregation is supposed to do?" "What should be the purpose of your congregation (or group)?"

NOTE: Once a set of words has been decided upon try to use them consistently. For example, if you decide to use "task" instead of "mission", use "task" throughout the discussion.

2. Practice: What programmatic expressions is the congregation using to illustrate its understanding of mission?

Note that #1 is theoretical, and #2 is practical. It should be possible to spend a little time synthesizing these two. For example, if blackboard or newsprint is available theory should be put in one column and practice in another, with the group requested to say honestly how well it feels theory is supported by practice.

3. What would you like to see accomplished through your congregation?

Here the group should be encouraged to dream "wild", according to its theory of mission.

4. What resources does the congregation bring to its mission or ministry?

Note that these resources could come from outside the congregation in the form of consultants, training conferences, and even financial resources.

5. What prevents the congregation from being more effective in accomplishing its task?

This question might be phrased in a different way to make it more positive, such as: "What would have to happen in order for us to accomplish our dreams?" Thus it might be that the group will decide that there are some dreams which simply cannot be accomplished because it is not possible to overcome whatever is standing in the way.

6. Where do we begin?

Here we need to develop priorities and a practical scheme for moving forward.

SPECIAL NOTES:

1. We have described the format both for the discussion with the pastor or staff, and with the small groups representing the structure of the congregation. On Sunday afternoon, when all the leadership is present, the same format can be used, but with some differences.

It will be desirable in the larger group for the consultant to summarize what he has heard from the smaller groups in response to each question, then to ask for further comment as to how well it reflects the thinking of the entire group. At this time opportunity for clarification is provided, as well as for additional input which might have been stimulated by the foregoing experience.

2. In speaking with the minister and other staff cover these questions, but include in Question 3 both the goals the individual has for his ministry in the church, and something about his own total personal goals. This is important to understand, though it need not be revealed to the congregation, especially if there are factors which are more or less confidential. For example, a man might really see his personal goals identified with the goals of this congregation. On the other hand, he might see his personal goals lying somewhere outside this particular congregation, and even outside the parish ministry. It is important for the consultant to know this, but it could be damaging to share such information with the congregation or its leaders. If it is to be shared it should be by the minister himself or by the consultant at the request of the minister.

3. While the Sunday afternoon experience will essentially recapitulate the six questions, there will be some difference: review what has been said in the various groups, add anything which seems to be of major omission, and see what kind of synthesis can be brought about. If each group has concentrated on its own functions and responsibility, very likely little conflict or lack of harmony will be present. On the other hand, it might be that the goals and ambitions of one group are such as to set that group at odds with another. These are differences which need to be worked out.

4. It should be important to try to arrive at some consensus as to the resources available and what prevents carrying on ministry.
5. Finally, the selection of goals and priorities needs to be complete, rather than tentative. If they cannot be finalized at this time, a process whereby they become final and are then reported to the congregation needs to be established.

D. Follow-up

Good follow-up should include future involvement of the consultant, program resources in the form of consultants who might be brought in as the result of planning, etc. The consultant needs to be alert to the possible need for outside resources. These can be introduced at the appropriate time both in the small group discussions and in the discussion of the entire leadership.

Follow-up should include evaluation at regular intervals. Suggestions for an evaluative instrument can be obtained from the Division of Parish Development.

E. Role of the Consultant

The role of the consultant is as a catalyst. The only provision for input of ideas is possibly on Sunday morning during the sermon. By that time each group will have expressed itself, and hopefully the consultant will not have colored their thinking. If he is a good discussion leader he will be able to listen to them without appearing to be judgmental. Suggestions, questions, alternatives and possibilities might have to be injected from time to time in order to stimulate discussion, but it should be done in such a way as to leave the group basically free. We are trying to stimulate the congregation, not show the brilliance of the consultant.

II. When the situation is pretty well known, and the group is "action" oriented--asking: "What should we be doing in our situation?"

This second type conference is less general. We imply here that the group seems to have a rather specific set of problems and circumstances in mind, and is asking for help in working with them. This is not as narrow as the next section where a specific single problem is delineated.

Often such invitation to participate grows out of the frustration of the group, and one needs constantly to be watching for a hidden agenda. In other words, the group might simply be asking someone from outside to come in in order to be convinced of the need for financial undergirding of a ministry. Or, the pastor or someone else might have a "hep" idea as to how to solve the problem, and wishes to have the consultant affirm his solution as correct.

A. Purpose:

Here our purpose is more limited than in the general renewal conference. The scope of concern has already been somewhat delineated by the congregation. On the other hand, we often find that the church starts one place, but that in probing for answers to the kind of problems stated, one eventually is able to open up the entire range of possibility, including a probing of the understanding of mission.

B. Methodology:

At least a full day and evening is recommended. The conference could begin in the afternoon and continue to noon of the next day, or begin in the evening and continue through the next afternoon.

1. Two or three hours spent with the minister or ministers in conversation, talking about needs, programs, problems, facilities, etc.
2. Windshield tour of the community or city.
3. Two to three hours with the laity and the ministers, possibly in the evening.

C. Format

Use the same probing procedure described in Section I, though possibly with less emphasis upon the theoretical, and more emphasis on the practical. This probably will be necessary in order to cover the ground in a more limited fashion and focus on the kind of concern that has been expressed by the group.

Here it is usually more necessary to outline for the group a range of possibilities. Do not attempt to give solutions or firm recommendations, but approach alternatives from the standpoint of "this is the way one church responded to a situation fairly similar to yours." Or, "Have you ever considered doing it this way?" Then describe some particular process or project. Or, one might simply lay out several alternatives, their advantages and disadvantages, to stimulate thinking. Alternatives can grow out of the local situation.

D. Follow-up

Follow-up here could well be similar to that in Section I above. Make certain that agreed upon follow-up takes place wherever possible. When it has been agreed that a certain other resource or consultant should be drawn into the picture, offer to write a letter to that person, including a summary of the ground covered in the consultation.

Approach number II usually involves the consultant in less time on the field than the former approach. It has been noted that usually it involves him in less follow-up. This might say something as to the effectiveness of this shorter format.

III. When a specific problem is presented.

This situation obtains when the group has formulated a specific question such as, "We believe that we should be starting a new church in our metropolitan area. Where and how?" Or "We would like to engage in some form of program for member recruitment." When this is the case be alert to possible involvement of staff from a Region, State, or City, or other agency, implied by job responsibility.

A. Purpose:

To test the theory of the congregation and find a way to accomplish its implied proposal, or to find an alternative.

B. Methodology

Meet with the minister, and with persons responsible for the specific program area of concern. Allow at least two hours for the meeting.

C. Format

Seek to find the answers to the six questions under Section I, but do it much more informally. Unless the consultant is convinced he should lead the discussion beyond the question being asked, he should try to confine his probing to those areas which offer possibility of being helpful in this specific case.

D. Follow-up

The same concerns for follow-up obtain here as in the other formats.

IV. General approach by the congregation to discover the possible relationship of the Division or Agency to its life and ministry. Essentially the congregation is saying that it wants to take advantage of any resource available.

A. Purpose

From the standpoint of the congregation, to discover how it can work with the Division of Parish Development, the Region/State/City, or other agency, for the enhancing of its own ministry.

B. Methodology

1. Review the situation briefly in terms of the six questions under Section I.
2. View the filmstrip "People Need People," or make some other adequate explanation of the approach of the Division of Parish Development, its goals for the local church, and the faith it has in the congregation as a useful instrument in God's hands. (If working for a Region/State/City, substitute appropriate resources.)

3. Discuss the resources available in the congregation, region, state, city, national agencies, etc.

C. Format

Two to three hours is usually sufficient for this approach.

D. Follow-up

Before the meeting concludes there should be an effort to outline next steps. Presumably, the congregation will have desired only to obtain information which it wishes to store for future use. On the other hand, something might have come out of the discussion which would cause the development of some further involvement of the consultant or other resources.

APPENDIX A: Surveying the Community

It will be important for the consultant to have some awareness of the community in which a church functions. If work is done for a single congregation this might be a limited geographical area, or it might be an entire city. For a rural church it might include a sizable territory in order to see various population centers in relation to one another.

Following are some ways to get a quick impression of the setting of the group being served:

1. "Windshield Survey"--As the term implies, this type survey is entirely from the front seat of an automobile. Have someone who knows the city well do the driving. The consultant should have the seat of best visibility--the front right seat. Either the driver, or another person seated in the back, can provide the commentary, including pointing out various things which need to be observed and answering questions the consultant might wish to ask. Allow time to retrace some parts of the tour for a more careful look at some aspects which might appear important, or to see one part of the community in relation to other parts.

The consultant will need to ask many questions. Therefore the interpreter should not plan to keep up such a steady commentary that the consultant sees or learns only what the interpreter thinks important. Many things are "interesting," but they are not necessarily important for the consultant to know. The interpreter, even though he is a long-time resident of the community should be prepared to learn something new under the penetrating questioning of the consultant.

2. "Walking Survey"--A walking survey can be combined with a windshield survey, or be used exclusively, depending upon the amount of territory to be covered and the time available. Often in changing or deteriorating communities it will be helpful to walk through certain sections and to stop in the places frequented by residents. If the neighborhood is one of peculiar night activity, such a walking survey might well be made at night.
3. Sociological Survey--If the renewal conference suggests the need, assistance in making a complete sociological survey and study of the church can be obtained from: The American Baptist Extension Corporation, Valley Forge, Pa. 19481.

APPENDIX B: Use of Small Buzz Groups

The design of "Approach" is based on small groups--5 to 10 or 12 at the most. Comments here refer not to that group, but to the further division of the group into buzz groups for increased participation.

Most of the questions lend themselves to far more discussion than time allows. To increase the participation and input divide the group into clusters of three or four. Instructions relative to the first question, I, C, I, might be: "In your cluster have each person contribute in turn as many words or phrases that describe what he thinks the task of the church to be. Have someone record these, eliminating duplication. After five minutes I will ask you to arrange your list into clusters of words or phrases that seem to go together as a family of ideas."

Allow about five minutes for the first listing, then two or three minutes for the grouping of words into clusters of words.

Report to the entire group can follow, asking each buzz group to contribute one cluster of words, then go on to the next until each buzz group has made its contribution. Continue in round-Robin fashion until all input has been made to the entire group. The consultant, or someone else, should record these on a chalkboard or newsprint as they are given.

After the listing is complete there needs to be some discussion as to priorities, but more particularly as to meanings. Refer to Appendix C for suggestions on how to clarify meanings. This discussion might not be conclusive. One of the findings of the conference might well be the need for the church to clarify its understanding of mission through the words it uses.

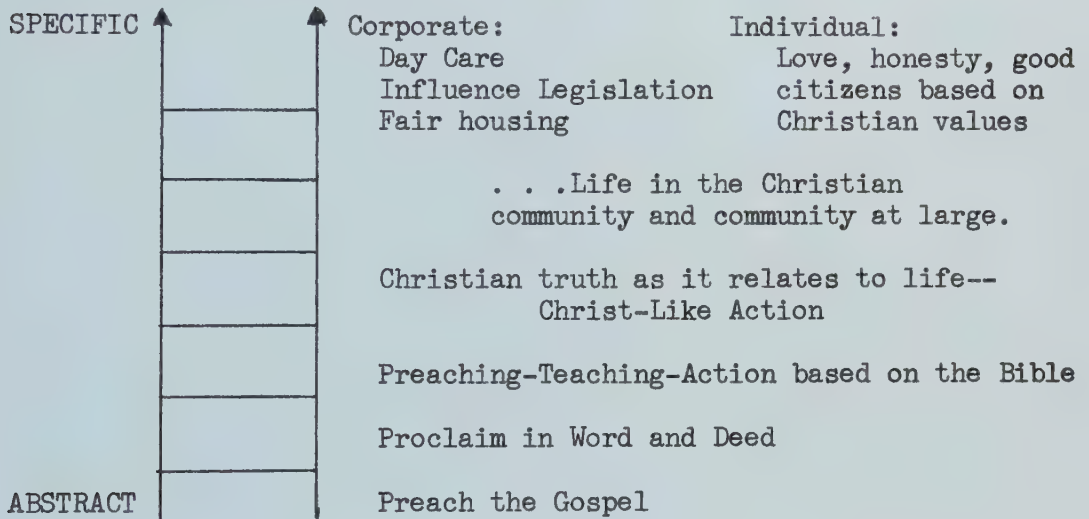
Be careful to portion out time so all questions can be covered.

APPENDIX C: Understanding Words

One of the most troublesome problems in communication is that two persons often use the same word but with different meanings. Closely akin to this difficulty is the failure to be concrete. In group discussion there are various ways to overcome these problems. Two are suggested here:

1. From the Abstract to the Specific

Use can be made of what is sometimes called the "ladder of abstraction." Diagram a ladder on the board with five or six rungs. When an abstract term is used put it on the bottom rung. Try to move upward with increasingly specific meanings until precise definition has been achieved. Example:



Note that the movement is upward--from the abstract to the specific. Any abstract term will be enhanced by this kind of treatment.

2. Selection of Meaning

Most words have more than one dictionary meaning. In addition, most persons have their own understanding of these words, conditioned by experience and personality. Words can come to have reasonably common meaning for persons in a group if discussion seeks to complete the chart below, moving from left to right.

Word	Could Mean	Probably Means (Seems to Mean)	Does Mean

Some attention to either of these methods of definition will not only enhance the discussion but will serve as a way of helping people to understand how to overcome problems of communication.

APPENDIX D: Learning-Teaching Techniques

A good facilitator will be aware of a number of techniques which can enhance the learning-teaching process. Perhaps his first need is to recognize that every process, including the one described in this paper, can be one of learning, and therefore it is one of teaching--we teach each other. Ample use of illustrations, definition of terms, learning by doing and many other techniques can be used.

A. Feat of Skill

One device which has been found helpful is to use a feat of skill to illustrate the need for observation, analysis, and practice. Example:

By using a rope about 30 inches long with a heavy knot at one end, a skilled person can tie a knot by moving the rope with the use of one hand.

Begin with the end of the rope in the hand, palm up. An upward movement to the right raises the knot about 12 inches, at which time a quick flip of the hand, palm down, and downward movement causes a loop to form in the rope. As the loop travels downward the knot drops through, forming a knot.

When this has been demonstrated several times without explanation one can ask such questions as: "What did you see?" Most people report they saw a knot tied. Press for answers, looking for someone to report more concrete observations. For example, if the answer is: "You tied a knot in a rope," you can answer: "I note you are result oriented--I tied a knot. You are somewhat aware of tools--the rope. But, did you not note the length of the rope, the heavy knot on one end, how I held the rope, the movement of arm and of wrist, etc?" If the rope has a small knot in the end held in the hand it can be pointed out that this fact, too, might be observed, but it has no real relevance. It is just a matter of convenience, or to keep the rope from ravelling--useful, but does not play a part in the tying of the knot itself.

To add a touch of humor, yet to make a further point, one can ask: "Why do you think I did this?" Various answers will be given. Someone might say: "To show off." The purpose is to be able to say that one needs to be aware not only of results, but also of tools, and methods. Do we have what it takes to get results desired? But one thing further is needed. Do we have the skill?

After pointing out the entire method, and perhaps going through it in slow motion, ask if someone wishes to volunteer to do the stunt. Unless one has worked it for a long time he cannot. This permits one to point out that skill is needed. Results cannot be expected without the requisite skill, which often calls for an investment of time and effort.

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B. Non-Verbal Signals

Often discussion can be speeded and points clarified more quickly if signals are used to express a need, without orally interrupting. The speaker can recognize the signals and respond accordingly. For example:

Each person might be supplied with 3x5 or 4x6 cards of different colors. Each color has a meaning. Cards can be held up to indicate a need.

Red: I hurt. I don't understand you.

Green: I agree.

Yellow: I disagree. I want to get in my two-cents' worth.

The consultant can be alert to the appearance of the cards and help make sure that points are clarified, diverse opinions expressed, or the conversation facilitated by recognizing that persons holding up green cards need not be polled for an opinion.

